

*Letter to a brother
concerning
some current teaching*

Copies of this letter may be had from : —
W. Mauchan,
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Didsbury, Manchester, 20.

Manchester,

October, 1960.

Mr.

Dear Mr.

In writing some remarks on the letter which Mr. J. Taylor, Junr. has sent you regarding the booklet on "The Teaching of Philippians 3, 3," I have thought it well not to address them in a letter to you, but to publish them separately with his letter and a reprint of the booklet. Mr. Taylor sent a copy of his letter here and a copy of the printed booklet has been sent to you.

I send these present remarks, however, because in my letter to you in July, 1956, I referred to an important matter that is raised again by Mr. Taylor in his letter.

In my letter I referred to "the pretentious element in Romanism, marked by assumption, and claiming divine authority for its teaching," and said that among the brethren you are with, "there is a clear drift in that direction, in the high claims they make for themselves and their authoritative ministry."

Mr. Taylor's letter lays down in a doctrinal and dogmatic way the teaching concerning authority in ministry and I therefore refer to it again; but first to the latest example of such ministry in your new teaching regarding eating with others than those who

are in your fellowship. Any one in your fellowship must not eat with unbelievers, or with believers who are not in fellowship with you.

Consider these remarks from a Revised Summary of Readings at Horsham with Mr. J. Taylor Junr., July 28th — August 1st 1960.

“The principles of the world involve independence of God and pleasing ourselves. They mark what obtains around us, both religiously and commercially. Therefore it is baneful to fraternise as is the world’s custom, with persons we have to meet and deal with in business. Eating and drinking is an act of fellowship, and such persons, and any one else not in fellowship (inclusive of natural relations) are in no different position from those we have withdrawn from according to 1 Cor. 5: 11. Not only is fellowship involved, but eating also bears on our relations with God. (1 Tim. 4: 4, 5). School meals and meals taken in canteens etc are on a different basis and do not involve fellowship. Young persons having parents not in fellowship have to recognise the natural link and honour father and mother, Parents, on the other hand, are responsible in their own house, and need to have a judgement as to their own children.

We need to remember the Lord’s words that He had come to cast a *fire* on the earth, and that there would be variance in households (Luke 12: 49—53). Thus if a young person remains uncommitted and is worldly, going into what is unclean, plainly showing he is not with his parents, we cannot eat with such.”

The scripture referred to in 1 Cor. 5:11 reads: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one not to eat." The apostle describes clearly the kind of person with whom we are not to eat; "if *any man that is called a brother* be a fornicator with *such an one* not to eat." Mr. Taylor says, "persons we have to meet and deal with in business . . . *such persons* are in no different position from those we have withdrawn from according to 1 Cor. 5: 11." Paul does *not* say. ⁽¹⁴⁾ In the previous verse, 1 Cor. 5: 10, he expressly excludes "such persons," men in the world, from the position of "such an one" in verse 11. But Mr. T. says they "are in no different position." Who is right, Paul or Mr. Taylor ?

The quotation proceeds, "any one else not in fellowship (inclusive of natural relations) are in no different position" from "such an one" in verse 11.

Paul does not say this and for Mr. Taylor to put in the position of 1 Cor. 5:11 "*any one not in fellowship,*" that is, not in your fellowship, is positively evil. Even a child in your households if "uncommitted," that is, not in your fellowship, is to be treated in the same way. Luke 12 is teaching entirely apart from 1 Cor. 5:11. "Worldly" and "going into what is unclean" can easily be "proved" of such a child, as godly and devoted brethren have been charged with "idolatry" and "spiritual fornication." If fear compels parents to put a child to eat by herself in the home, dread of such

treatment will no doubt force some into your fellowship, others it may drive *into the world*. It will not *draw* them to Christ and His people. I marvel, dear brother, that intelligent believers like yourself, sit in silent submission to such dreadful teaching.

“Eating and drinking is an act of fellowship.” How contrary this is to the truth we realise when we think of those with whom the Lord and His disciples ate and drank as recorded in the gospels. Partaking of the bread and cup, the Lord’s table, *is* an act of fellowship, as Paul teaches in 1 Cor. 10: 16, but eating and drinking in the ordinary way is not.

If a believer must not eat with an unbeliever, why does Paul in 1. Cor. 10, instruct believers how to behave if they accept an invitation from an unbeliever to eat with him? If minded to go on worldly or social lines, this would be just worldliness which the word of God plainly and strongly condemns. (James 4, 4). But where is the true believer on our Lord Jesus Christ who does not say that Paul’s inspired instructions exactly answer the exercises of his soul when he has occasion, by invitation or otherwise, to eat with an unbeliever? His concern is to give thanks to God for the food, to eat and drink to His glory, and to make the occasion an opportunity to seek the blessing and salvation of the unbeliever. Thus he would be an imitator of Paul, as Paul was of Christ our Saviour (1 Cor. 10, 27—11, 1).

Surely, as these words of Paul suggest, we should follow the Lord’s example in the gospels and the example of His disciples, though He and they were

reviled by the scribes and Pharisees for eating with publicans and sinners. To say that the Lord was unique in this is not right. He is *always* unique in His Person. But in regard of this matter of eating with unbelievers, what the scribes and Pharisees said of Him they also said of His disciples who followed His example (Luke 15, 2; 5, 30).

What now of telling brethren who care for parents who are not in your fellowship that they must not eat, or even drink a cup of tea, with them? Is not this plainly and severely condemned by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 15, 3—9? The same scribes and Pharisees who reviled the Lord and His disciples for eating with publicans and sinners, also put out teaching of their own that set aside the commandment of God, that a man should honour his father and mother. A *first* principle of piety in those who belong to the house of God is “to *render a return* on their side to their parents;” (1 Tim. 5, 4). How many years they ate and drank at their parents’ table, and now you say they must not eat with them or even drink a cup of tea with them! When an aged mother, to whom under God’s hand he owed so much, is being cared for by a son in your fellowship, he is told now he must not eat, or drink a cup of tea, with her. If he does as you say, he says it would break her heart. There are many among you distressed by these things. Fear may force them to submit because they feel that the axe of excommunication hangs over them and will descend relentlessly if they disregard your “authoritative teaching” and obey the commandment of God. Parents are not only to be cared for if needful. They

are to be *honoured*, not wounded by refusing to eat with them

As to eating with believers, as already quoted, the Spirit of God very clearly specifies in the scripture the kind of persons with whom we are *not* to eat or have social intercourse. They are those guilty of serious evil conduct or holding evil doctrine (1 Cor. 5, 11. 2 John 9—11). But your teaching implies that membership of your body or fellowship confers a kind of sanctity on you that would be defiled by eating even with godly brethren who may be more separate from evil in the world and in Christendom than many of yourselves.

It is clear from the scriptures referred to that your new doctrine on eating is not according to Christ; it is not what we have heard from Him. It is not "the truth as it is in Jesus" (Eph. 4. 20—21). If any Old Testament scripture is interpreted in a way that is contrary to what we find in the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can be absolutely certain the interpretation is wrong.

I must confess I did not think when I wrote you four years ago that things would so quickly drift as far as this. That Mr. Darby's teaching would be further "adjusted" was to be expected. But I did not expect Paul's teaching to be "adjusted," nor did I ever think that the teaching and example of the Lord Jesus Himself would be so boldly set aside. You may speak of "fresh light" from "the temple." But is it light from *God's* temple? It cannot be if it is contrary, as it manifestly is, to what we see in the blessed One, in whom all divine light shines.

It is evident that this doctrine of authority in ministry generates in its development a certain boldness that is seen at its worst in the effrontery that is found in some of the dogmas of the church of Rome. The initial innovations, we can be sure, were innocent in appearance, if not quite scriptural. But once the underlying principle of authority in ministry is asserted and accepted, there is scope for the mind and will of man to introduce and enforce doctrines that mark an increasing departure from the truth of God.

Since my last letter to you I have seen and read an address by Mr. S. McCallum on "Features of Authority in the Ministry" He claims in that address that your recognised authoritative ministry is "divinely accredited ministry." "The ministry" he says, "I mean divinely accredited ministry—carries the full weight of divine authority, the authority of the ascended Man, the authority of the Spirit, the authority of the commission that is given to the servant who is used in a divinely accredited way" In view of such a claim it is not surprising that he objects to some referring to the scriptures in comparison with such ministry, "as if the ministry was one thing and the scriptures another" If, of course, this "divinely accredited ministry carries the full weight of divine authority," what more could the scriptures carry?

Mr. Darby is first in his list of "divinely accredited ministers." If you refer to his Synopsis on 2 Timothy, you will find that in writing of ministry and the scriptures, he, too, had this "objectionable" thought that ministry is one thing and the scriptures

another; indeed he does not recognise authority in ministry at all but in the scriptures alone. (Synopsis, Stow Hill Edn. Vol. 5, ps. 132/7, 146/150).

Another on his list (Mr. Raven) said expressly that authority is in the scriptures, *not* in ministry. So that whilst Mr. M. refers appreciatively to these men, his teaching flatly contradicts theirs on the subject of which he was speaking.

Mr. McCallum uses certain scriptures in Acts 13, Ephesians 4, and 2. Tim. 3, as a basis for his claims. Any believer who reads them will readily see that there is not a word in them to support his claim that your "divinely accredited ministry carries the full weight of divine authority."

The first in Acts 13 refers to what was primarily evangelical ministry to which Paul and Barnabas were called and sent forth by the Holy Spirit. Their ministry was divinely accredited, not by what they claimed for it, but *by what God wrought by it* among the nations. This is three times referred to, as you will see in Acts 14. 27; 15, 12; 21. 17. God may accredit ministry in other ways, but one way, as these scriptures show, is by what *He* has wrought by it.

What sober minded believer would think of restricting such ministry to servants in any one community of Christians? The ministry of Mr. Darby and others was certainly accredited in this way. But was not Mr. Spurgeon's evangelical ministry also divinely accredited *by what God wrought by it*? It certainly was. God may and does accredit a servant's ministry without in any way accrediting the system he may be connected with.

The second scripture obviously refers to *all* true ministry through gifts from the ascended Head of the church, whether evangelical, pastoral or teaching ministry. Does Mr. M. think there is no true evangelical, pastoral or teaching ministry apart from your leaders and yourselves? If there *is* such ministry, as there certainly is, then Ephesians 4 teaches that it comes from the ascended Head. There is no true ministry that does not come from Him, for the edification of His body. Such ministry is not confined to the leaders Mr. M. refers to, and *they* would be the first to say so. "Apostles and prophets" *are* unique as their inspired and authoritative teaching in the scriptures is the foundation on which we are built (Eph. 2: 20).

The third scripture is in 2 Timothy, and contains the important words, "knowing of whom thou has learned them." This, Mr. Darby refers, and surely rightly, to the apostles. I believe it was another on Mr. M's list of accredited ministers, who remarked that if anyone said he had something he had not got from the apostles, he would like to know where he got it. Their teaching *has* "the full weight of divine authority" *because* it is included in "all scripture inspired of God" All true ministry is marked by *power*, the power of the Holy Spirit, by which God makes the truth effective in souls, whether it be evangelical, pastoral, or teaching ministry. When we see *what God has wrought by such ministry*, we recognise it as divinely accredited. May God in His mercy save us from a miserably contracted and sectarian

view of *His* operations. In His love and wisdom, because of what we are, and the conditions in which we are found, God graciously regulates *us* by His commandments. But we must not think to limit His operations. We rejoice in all He does.

There is, of course, as you know, another body in Christendom that claims “the full weight of divine authority” for what *it* regards as divinely accredited ministry. I refer to the church of Rome.

If you want a doctrinal basis for that claim you will find it in the letter addressed to you by Mr. Taylor, Jun. He says that authority is in the Spirit in the church; so does the church of Rome. He says that the authority of the Spirit is in certain teachers; so do they. He asserts that the interpretation of the scriptures is by the Spirit in the temple in the church; they agree. There is nothing in the *principle* of Mr. T’s doctrine of authority which the church of Rome would not accept. They would also maintain that their dogmas were determined by the Spirit in the temple. No doubt where he refers, as in his recent book (the Name of Jesus), to “the temple in New York,” or elsewhere, they would say the “temple in Rome;” and instead of the teachers he names, they would name others of their own. But though there would be these differences as to places and persons, as to the *principle* in their doctrine of authority there would be none. His doctrine is theirs.

This is proved, I am deeply sorry to say, by its effect in those who accept this doctrine of authority in ministry. It is distressing to see it. To call their

attention to scripture that clearly contradicts some teaching from “the temple” is useless. There is an obsequious acquiescence in anything recognised as “authoritative teaching” such as is only to be seen in a Roman Catholic’s servile acceptance of the “authoritative teaching” of his church.

I need not repeat that the servants of the Lord named by Mr. M. in his address, and Mr. T in his letter, utterly rejected the doctrine of authority they are teaching. If you asked them for their *authority* in teaching, they would say the scriptures, the apostles’ doctrine, inspired of God; if you asked them whose teaching and *power* made their ministry so rich and precious and effective, they would say the teaching and power of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, as you must know, the great system of corrupt teaching in the church of Rome, was originated and enforced on the basis of their doctrine of authority, in their teachers, and in the church. A doctrine of authority more contrary to scripture, more obnoxious to Mr. Darby and such men of God, more dangerous to His people—or more agreeable to the church of Rome—it would be difficult to find. How many of our brethren in Reformation times were martyred because they rejected that very doctrine and maintained that divine authority is in the scriptures alone.

Some thought there would be a division among you on account of these things. I did not think so. Brethren could not be more watchful or more rigorous than they are now in the repression and excom-

munication of any who deviate from the “authoritative” line. I need not name these brethren now. The list is a growing one. Some of them have spent their lives in serving the Lord among you. This matters little. They do not conform to the line set by “authoritative ministry” and that is enough. In this way “unity” is maintained, and all are supposed to be saying the same thing. Those whose consciences forbid them doing so say nothing, and find safety in silence—for some of them, a silence of sorrow and shame and tears.

Mr. T’s pontifical pronouncement about Manchester matters in his letter will disturb no one who passed through those times of sorrow with God, and sought to judge things in the light of His word. To such those proceedings, on which Mr. T. presumes to put the seal of the Spirit of God, were in certain cases, and in important respects, a serious perversion of the holy discipline of the house of God.

May God in His mercy deliver His beloved people from the darkness and danger of these strange doctrines, so that they may again walk together in love, and in holiness and truth; keeping the word of Christ, and not denying His Name as the Holy and True.

Your brother in Christ,

JAMES MACDONALD.

Copies of the booklet containing the paper on Philippians 3:3, Mr. Taylor's letter in reply to it, and remarks on Mr. Taylor's letter, may be obtained from the address on the cover of this paper.